



A HISTORY OF ARUBA



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# A HISTORY of ARUBA



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## PREFACE

Though small in area and population, these islands in the semi-circle of West Indies extending from Cuba at the upper end, around through Trinidad to Aruba at the lower have played an important part in the history of the western hemisphere since the discovery of those two great continents, North and South America.

Forming, as they do, a natural gateway between the old and new worlds, it is not surprising that the great powers for centuries fought to obtain and hold control of them. Because of this we find a great variety and admixture of languages and customs, living proof of the chaos of early events. It had the added result of creating a baffling confusion in the chronicling of historical features so that the compilation of an absolutely authentic history is considered improbable if not impossible.

Confining ourselves, then, to the Netherland West Indies, with which we are now intimately connected, we offer in this publication a "History" which we feel is reasonably accurate.

Our effort is primarily intended for the interest and benefit of employees of the Iago Oil & Transport Company, Limited, and subsidiary companies, and is not an endeavor to enter into competition with any similar publications.





# West Indies







## EARLY HISTORY OF THE TERRITORY

In order to obtain a comprehensive idea of the history of the Island of Aruba, it will first be necessary to delve into the early history of the Netherland West Indies group, consisting of Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Martin.

The earliest known inhabitants of the group of Netherland West Indies Islands were the Aroweeks, a tribe of Indians originating in South America. Little is known of their habits. Their mode of burial differed from that of the American Indians in that the bodies were baked in earthen vase-like vessels made of a peculiar clay. The vase was extremely hard in texture and airtight. The bodies, as a general rule, were placed in a sitting posture. Several of these vases have been found in Aruba, some by Van Koolwijk, a Catholic priest, and are now to be seen in the National Museum in Holland. These vases have also been found in Bonaire and Curacao.

Seemingly, this tribe of Aroweeks was exterminated by a tribe of Caribes, who undoubtedly were cave and cliff dwellers as evidenced by the hieroglyphics found on the walls and ceilings of caves on the Islands of Bonaire and Curacao. A few good examples of these hieroglyphics have also been found in Aruba in districts known as Ayo and Piedra Plata.

Credit for the discovery of the Islands of Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire, Trinidad and Margarite has been given to Alonso Ojeda, a Spaniard who, with a small fleet, sailed from Santa Maria, Spain, in May, 1499, landing on the Island of Curacao in the same year. Evidence has been found in old volumes and manuscripts that Ojeda, noting the tremendous size of the Indian inhabitants, named the

place "THE LAND OF THE GIANTS". Ojeda has been given, also, the credit for the colonizing of the Islands. He established the first Spanish Colonies in the West Indies and for the greater part of the first century after discovery, Spain maintained absolute power over these provinces.

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#### HOLLAND CAPTURES AND RULES CURACAO

In the year 1597, and during the eighty year war between Spain and Holland, Several organizations were formed in Rotterdam for the purpose of plundering Spanish ships on the seas. This commerce, known as Legal Piracy, proved so profitable that on June 3rd, 1621, the West India Company was formed in Rotterdam by the Government of Holland, being given a commercial monopoly in the Western Hemisphere from the southernmost point of New Foundland to the Cape of Good Hope, which is the extreme point of Africa. This included all islands south of the Tropic of Cancer and also the coast of North and South America, from the Meridian of the Cape of Good Hope to the Meridian of New Guinea. Only ships of the West India Company were permitted to trade in these parts and when any vessel of another enterprise was found, it was attacked, plundered and sunk.

The Board of Directors, or Management of the West India Company, was made up of representatives of five principal cities of Holland--

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Sealand, Friesland, and Groningen. This body of men was known as GENTLEMEN XIX.

The capital investment of the Company was fls. 7,200,000.00. Its Directors were empowered to enter into treaties with foreign empires, form armies and navies, establish fortresses, equip fleets and install governments. Thus the West India Company was responsible only to the Seven United Provinces.

The West India Company derived the majority of its revenue from the Slave Trade. The slaves were brought from Africa and sold in the ASSYEN-TO or NEGROPONT in Curacao. Prices ranged from 600.00 to 1,000 florins, according to weight and strength. Salt and Dye Wood trade were also profitable.

The original fleet of the West India Company consisted of thirty-two war ships and eight sloops of war.

In the early part of the year 1634, the West India Company gained a permanent foothold in Curacao by fitting out a fleet of four vessels and with 225 trained soldiers sailed against Curacao, then under Spanish rule, and conquered the Island on July 10, 1634. Since 1634, the Island of Curacao has remained under Dutch control.

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PETER STUYVESANT

Mr. Van Welbeek was the first Governor of



Curacao, holding the office until 1636. There then followed a succession of Governors until the year 1643, at which time the Parliament of Holland appointed Peter Stuyvesant.

Portugal and Brazil were at this time at war, and some 200 refugees arrived from Brazil. They swore allegiance to Holland and were dispatched to New Amsterdam (New York) to protect that colony from the repeated attacks of the American Indians, sailing from Curacao on the "DE BLAUWE HAN."

Most schoolboys know of Peter Stuyvesant and his wooden leg from American History. He was shot during an engagement against the French at St. Martin. The leg was amputated in Curacao and buried in the Cemetery that, to this day, bears his name.

The Parliament of Holland approved the proposal of Stuyvesant to unite the Colonies of Curacao and New Netherlands, and on July 28th 1646, he became Governor of the New Entity with headquarters in New Amsterdam (New York).

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#### DUTCH GOVERNMENT AT WAR WITH FRANCE AND ENGLAND

In 1672, The Dutch Government declared war on France and England. Soon thereafter a treaty was signed with England but the state of war existed until the year 1678.

In July 1677, a famous French Admiral, "De-Estres" with a large fleet sailed from France for Caribbean waters. The fleet lay at anchor in the harbour of Martinique, a French possession, for several months, and in May, 1678, sailed against Curacao. His ignorance in navigation on the Caribbean Sea resulted in running his fleet aground on the rocks at Aves, west of Bonaire. Thirty of his ships were left behind and with the remainder of the fleet, De-Estres sailed for San Domingo.

As soon as Donckner, then Governor of Curacao, heard of De-Estres' misfortune, he sailed to the Aves Islands for the purpose of salvaging arms and munitions from the ship-wrecked vessels of De-Estres' fleet. The voyage was successful, history indicating that there were brought to Curacao some 55 pieces of heavy cannon. These cannon were used by the Dutch Government in Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire for defense purposes until the beginning of the 19th century. (Note: There is little doubt that the cannon on the beach at the ruins of Fort William III in Oranjestad are some of the same pieces salvaged from the French fleet under the command of Admiral De-Estres in 1678).

At the time Donckner equipped his salvage fleet, Jan Erasmus Reining, a famous Dutch pirate, operated in Caribbean waters. In general the pirate Reining made himself very useful to the Dutch Government, and gained a degree of protection through his service.

In 1713, a fleet of French warships under the command of Admiral Cassart visited Caribbean waters, and having captured and burned the Dutch colonies at Surinam, proceeded to Curacao. The Dutch Colony at Curacao had been warned of the

approach of Admiral Cassart, and immediately prepared for his attack. After a desperate fight, in which many of the Dutch inhabitants were killed, the French landed, capturing Willemstad, the Dutch Colony, on February 8th, 1713. The French Commander restored the colony to the Dutch Governor only after having collected a ransom of 115,000 Spanish pesos. An indication of the wealth of Curacao at that time was the fact that this sum was paid within 48 hours after Cassart's demand.

Holland now realized that the colonies were not sufficiently protected, and during the following year considerable money was expended in fortifying the Island

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#### CURACAO'S PROSPERITY SUFFERS REVERSES

During the year 1782, the French Relief Army, after assisting in gaining the independence of the United States under the command of Lafayette, called at Curacao. Upon the signing of the peace treaty between England and France, Lafayette sailed for France.

At this time war existed between England and Holland, also France and England. With the independence of the United States, the period of prosperity for Curacao ended, due to the fact that during the Revolutionary War, Curacao had

been a source of supply and trading post for the American forces. Business naturally shifted to Boston, New York and Newport News.

In 1795 the West India Company dissolved. Its charter was granted and signed by the SEVEN UNITED NETHERLANDS. After the Revolution of 1795, and the formation of the Batavian Republic, which existed until 1806, the Charter under which the West India Company operated, ceased to exist. Its possessions, by decree of the Batavian Republic were declared Crown Colonies.

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### THE CURACAO SLAVE REVOLUTION

During the time of the French Revolution, 1791-1793, Revolutionary ideas of the French penetrated to the French West Indies possessions, and emancipated slaves from these colonies entered Curacao, spreading propaganda among the blacks of Curacao. As a result, slaves refused to work and finally, in 1795, revolted. Committees went to the Colonial Consul at Willemstadt, to plead their cause. The main body of blacks, however, having broken into and robbed a rum distillery, and while gloriously intoxicated, declared themselves free; "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" being their motto.

The plantation owners fled to Willemstadt for protection, and the slaves helped themselves



to arms and munitions on the plantations and marched to the district known as Fontaine, which is in the hills of Curacao, and there entrenched themselves.

The Colonial Council, being at a loss for a solution to the problem, sent the Roman Catholic priest to their stronghold. He returned with the message that if Holland did not liberate them as France had done their slaves, they would break bondage.

Operating from their stronghold, the slaves burned and robbed the plantations and it was only after the arrival of two Dutch war ships that they were driven back to their masters. By September of the same year, they were back at work. Although the damage done by them was considerable few white lives were lost and as an example to others, the ring leaders Toella Bastion and Pedro Macoa, were hanged on crosses, their arms broken above and below the elbows, and their legs broken above and below the knees. Their faces were burned with torches beyond recognition. They were then beheaded, and their heads exhibited in public. The left ear of all other participants was severed at its base, as an indication of their absolute submission.

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#### ENGLISH RULE CURACAO, 1806 - 1815

In 1804 and 1805, the English made numerous attacks on Curacao, but each time were repelled.

Due to the English Fleet being "Lord of the Seas" Curacao had to defend herself and received very little aid from Holland. It is therefore quite remarkable that the Dutch on the Island were able to withstand the repeated attacks of the English Fleet which was ever present in the Caribbean.

At about midnight on New Years Eve, 1806, the English Fleet sailed up the harbor of Curacao, capturing the two Dutch warships anchored there, and with little fighting captured Williamstad, as the entire garrison were out, at home, or scattered about the city enjoying themselves. There was practically no resistance.

The island of Curacao remained under English jurisdiction until 1815, the year of the Peace of Paris, when it was restored to the Dutch.

Commerce which had been developed by the Dutch then diverted to St. Thomas, an English possession, due to the English Blockade designed for that purpose. Under English directorship, the first newspaper was published in Curacao and it may be of interest to know that this publication still exists - "The Curacao Courant." (Aug., 1938).

The importation and sale of slaves became unlawful in Curacao in the year 1816.

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## BUCCANEERS OF THE SPANISH MAIN

During the governorship of DuFay, about the year 1730, pirates roamed the West Indies, endangering the commerce and welfare of the colonies, ravaging coast towns and shipping. Active warfare raged for many months in an endeavor to suppress the repeated attacks of pirates on ships laden with rich cargoes of slaves and provisions.

At about this time Balthamai Carrion, one of the boldest, raided Aruba, killing members of the Governor's household. Also active was Juan Antonio, Dios de la Rabbia (God of the Rebels) who had his headquarters on the island of Bonaire; at times, when hard pressed, he would go into hiding in the caves of Aruba, where he frequently enlarged his plunder with cattle and slaves.

During one of his raids, in 1736, he was taken captive, brought to Curacao and promptly hanged. A few weeks later Carrion, who had raided Aruba, was taken captive and also brought to Curacao. After his brutal treatment of the Governor's family in Aruba, he expected no mercy at the hands of the Dutch Military authorities, and history indicates that he received a warm welcome and was speedily put to death. The most feared pirate of the time was a Frenchman by the name of D'Estrades, and it was an occasion of great joy to the colonists when he was brought in in chains, and promptly executed.

These continual sea and land skirmishes with pirates occasioned great losses in men, and the Governor proposed to build a hospital for the care of wounded sailors. Funds were raised by public contribution and the hospital was soon in operation.

## MONETARY SYSTEM

For centuries the monetary unit of Curacao was the Peso of Eight (Pieces of Eight) having a value of 8 reales, a Spanish coin then in use throughout the West Indies.

During the year 1896, when there was a shortage of silver coin, the Governor of Curacao ordered that the Pieces of Eight be quartered, each portion having a value of Two Reales. In 1800, the "Golden Doubloon" was introduced in Curacao, having a value of 24 pieces of eight. The "Golden Johanisson" was also used, having a value of 90 reales or about 11.25 Pieces of Eight. The weight of the Golden Johanisson was 22 carats of pure gold.

In 1824 and 1826 all these coins were converted into Dutch Currency and although foreign coin was still used extensively, the basis of exchange was the Dutch Florin.

In 1827, Curacao was declared a Free Port. This was an endeavor to regain its commerce which had been lost during the Napoleonic Era.

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## CURACAO TODAY

Curacao, today, is one of the principal shipping centers in the West Indies. It serves as a trans-shipping point to all West Indies Islands and to Central and South America. With



the establishment of the "Curacaosche Petroleum Industrie", which is part of the Shell Company, Curacao has taken its place as one of the important sea ports of the world.

It has become a tourist center of considerable note, being a stopping point for practically all Caribbean cruises, including those made by the largest liners. Its main shopping street is famous among tourists, and when a cruise ship is in harbor, the stores are filled to capacity with hundreds of Americans buying perfume, jewelry, and native handicrafts gathered from all parts of the Caribbean territory and South America.

One of Curacao's most noted exhibits is the well-known pontoon bridge, a structure as long as a city block, which pivots on one end as it is drawn back by cables to make way for tankers and freighters.

In topography and even in shape Curacao is very similar to Aruba. It can be seen plainly from the south lighthouse on clear days when the trade winds die down.

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## THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY OF VENEZUELA

A proper understanding of the phenomenal industrial growth of the Island of Aruba requires at least a rudimentary knowledge of the history, development, and conditions peculiar to the petroleum industry in nearby Venezuela.

In the Northwestern part of the Republic of Venezuela lies that section known to the oil industry as "Maracaibo Lake Basin". This vast expanse of land and water covering an area of approximately 40,000 square miles overlies what many authorities believe to be the largest deposits of crude oil known to man. It is bounded on the south by the Merida mountains and on the west by the Perija Mountains, both of which ranges have peaks extending above the snow line and have slopes which fall away rapidly to the low flat plains encircling the shores of Lake Maracaibo. It takes in all the coastal plain extending from the Paraguana Peninsula on the East to the Guajira Peninsula on the West. Lake Maracaibo itself is in reality an almost landlocked gulf of the Caribbean and makes possible transportation to practically every section of the basin.

Although Lake Maracaibo is, for the most part, sufficiently deep to permit navigation by ocean going vessels, the presence of Zapara Bar, which extends across the mouth of the lake, makes entry of deep draft vessels impossible. In order to overcome this obstacle, the oil companies have developed a shallow-draft flat-bottom lake tank ship for the purpose of transporting the oil from the many fields of the basin to points where it may be refined and ultimately loaded into ocean going tankers. Practically every large producing company in the Basin operates a fleet of these lake tankers.

The city of Maracaibo is located on the western shore of the mouth of Lake Maracaibo and is approximately 160 miles sailing distance southwest of Aruba. It is the second largest city in the Republic and, insofar as the Petroleum industry is concerned, is the most important. In fact, it is often referred to as the oil capital of South America. Population is estimated at approximately 100,000.

Facts surrounding the original discovery of oil in Lake Maracaibo Basin are vague, and are clouded with many conflicting reports. It is recorded, however, that a concession was granted an organization known as the Compania Petrolera del Tachira in the year 1894 for the purpose of exploiting oil deposits near San Cristobal in the State of Tachira which lies near the extreme southern boundary of the Basin. Petroleum was obtained by means of shallow hand-dug wells and seepage pits, and the producers were principally interested in the development of an asphalt industry. Little further development is recorded until 1907 when the Royal Dutch Shell was granted an extensive concession and began a program of exploration of the Basin. It was not until 1910 that major producing companies began to take more than a passive interest in the petroleum possibilities of Venezuela.

In 1912 the Bermudez Company, a subsidiary of General Asphalt Company of Philadelphia, completed a wildcat well in the Guanoco Field in the State of Sucre in extreme Eastern Venezuela near what is now the Quiriquire field. Although this discovery served to divert attention from the Basin for the next year, a wildcat producer in the State of Lara on the Eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo opened up the Mene Grande Field in 1914 and development of Lake Maracaibo Basin was begun in

earnest. In 1915 the Caribbean Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, opened the Totumo Field on the Western shore of the lake in the State of Zulia about fifty miles from the city of Maracaibo. Local interests later brought suit against the Shell for their property in this field and gained possession through a supreme court decision. Holdings in the field were then sold to the Creole Syndicate which was later acquired by the Standard Oil Company of Venezuela, which is a subsidiary of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey.

The next discovery well of importance was the Venezuelan Oil Concessions' (Royal Dutch Shell) Toldo No. 1 in the State of Zulia on the southwestern side of the Lake. This became known as the Tarra Field. In 1917, the Caribbean Petroleum Company discovered the Misoa Field in the District of Sucre, State of Zulia. The LaRosa Field, one of the largest producing areas of the entire basin, was also discovered in 1917 by the Venezuelan Oil Concessions. It was in the LaRosa Field that the V.O.C. drilled in the well which is generally considered to have been the largest producer in the entire Maracaibo Lake Basin. The Los Barroso No. 2 came in December 16th, 1922, and flowed until December 25th at an estimated rate of 100,000 barrels per day. During the nine days of its life it is estimated to have produced one million barrels of oil. The LaRosa Field is located on the Eastern shores of the Lake in the District of Bolivar approximately twenty-five miles from the city of Maracaibo.

During the next ten years discoveries of new fields followed upon the heels of one another until Lake Maracaibo became practically surrounded with producing areas. The year 1926 marked the discovery of the Lagunillas, Punta



Benitez, and Ambrosio fields. The discovery well of the Lagunillas field was drilled by the Venezuela Gulf Oil Company in May 1926, and since that date the field has accounted for almost fifty percent of the entire production of Lake Maracaibo Basin. It is located on the eastern shore of the Lake approximately sixty miles south of the city of Maracaibo.

Since Venezuela, as a producer of crude oil, has ranked with the first three nations of the world for the past twelve years, it is obvious that she has had to look to the balance of the world for a market for her production. By 1924 the problem of shipping the rapidly increasing production from Lake Maracaibo to world markets was becoming acute. Most of the larger producing companies began casting about for suitable deep-water terminals for loading the oil into ocean-going vessels. The construction of the small shallow-draft lake tankers, mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, was begun. These little boats solved the problem, insofar as going into the lake and transporting the crude direct from the fields was concerned, but deep-water terminals, where the lake tankers might discharge and store their cargoes until it could be lifted by ocean-going vessels and transported to other parts of the world, were necessary.

Lying as they do, just outside the Gulf of Venezuela in the Caribbean Sea, surrounded by many fathoms of water and with good harbor possibilities, the Netherlands Islands of Curacao and Aruba were possessed of all the physical attributes necessary for ideal storage and loading terminals. Add to this a political regime which makes large scale investments of foreign capital towards industrial development appear entirely safe and it is easy to see why both islands were



selected for important sites. Centuries of wise, farsighted and just government have won for the House of Orange from its subjects a loyalty and love so great that any possibility of a change of government is completely outside the realm of comprehension of the people of Holland. This is an important consideration when foreign capital is considering an investment of millions of dollars for industrial development.

Considering these things it is not surprising that in 1924 officials of the Pan American Petroleum Corporation (The E. L. Doheny Company) arrived in Oranjestad and completed arrangements for a long term lease of a section of the Island of Aruba lying at the extreme Southeast end of the Island.

In another section of this book you will follow the great and rapid industrial development which followed.

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SEA



ANDICURA BAY

FONTAINE

ARIKOK GOLD MINE

VOLCANIC LAVA CLIFFS

GOLD SMELTER RUIN

SHIDAHARAKA GOLD MINE

SPANISH LAGOON

SABANETA

SAN NICHO

CONCESSION OF LAGO OIL & TRANS. CO.

B.A. BEACH

CORAL REEF

ES  
2



## ARUBA

Aruba, one of six Dutch possessions in the West Indies, is located about twenty miles off the northern coast of South America, the nearest point being Cape San Roman on the peninsula "Paraguana", Venezuela. The geographic location of the island is  $70^{\circ} 3' 30''$  WL and  $12^{\circ} 27' 25''$  NL, being about fourteen miles at its longest point and about seven and one-half miles at its widest point, and containing about one hundred square miles of territory.

At times, when the sky is clear and the sun brilliant, the peninsula and Paraguana Mountain can be seen plainly outlined on the horizon, and occasionally long stretches of mountains can be seen along the Venezuelan coast to the east.

Alonso Ojeda, a Spaniard, after leaving Curacao in August 1499, landed at Cape San Roman, Venezuela. History does not definitely indicate that he actually landed in Aruba, but being so near the coast it is believed that he did and the honor of discovery has been bestowed on him.

The island is formed principally of several varieties of white coral, granite, and prehistoric volcanic lava. The entire length of its leeward side is fringed by reefs, and adding to its air of the tropics are the dozens of palm groves scattered over the west half of the island. Trade winds blow from the northeast throughout nine months of the year, and the east end has been swept clear of soil, leaving only bare sharp coral over most of the area. Thus aside from the hardy cactus, most of the vegetation that survives from one rainy season to the next is concentrated in the westward half of the island, which holds a portion of the soil blown onto it.



A range of hills extends along the north and northeast coast bending to the west. The highest point on the island is Yamanota, 560 feet above sea level. The coast along the south and southwest is low, and at places is below sea level. The southern tip of the island ends in a promontory of cliffs that rise approximately 150 feet above the sea.

At Daimari the force of the waves has so undermined the coast that a grotto has been formed and white vapor from the waves can be seen rising out of the ground about one hundred and twenty yards from the shore. This resembles the "Hato Cave" in Curacao.

The island is divided into four provinces, the first, known as "Playa", includes the capitol "Oranjestad", located on "Paardenbaai" (Horses Bay). Up to the end of the Eighteenth Century, the administrative offices were located on Commander's Bay (Sabaneta) when in 1796, Governor J. R. Lauffer moved his offices to the village which had sprung up on Paardenbaai. Up to this time the village had not been named, being known as "Playa". A small fort was built on Paardenbaai (Fort William III) and in 1830, the Governor of Curacao, on an inspection trip to Aruba, named the capitol "Oranjestad", in honor of the Royal House of Orange in Holland.

"Paardenbaai" (Horses Bay) obtained its name thru the landing of hundreds of horses from the Spanish Main. It is indicated that the horses were reshipped to Jamaica.

Noord is situated in the Second district. In the third are located Santa Cruz and Balashi, while Sabaneta, and San Nicholas are located in the Fourth Province. These are the principal inhabited villages. All land is Government owned.

and is leased to land holders.

The principal automobile road extends from San Nicholas to Oranjestad. Bordering the road, at numerous intervals, is found the sisal plant, which, while much taller, greatly resembles the Century Plant and is often mistaken for it. Most of the island is traversed by roads of varying degrees of passability; among the most pleasant of the drives is the trip from Santa Cruz to Fontaine across the "continental divide"; the roads to Andicura, Bushiribam, and the north lighthouse also yield interesting scenes.

Near Balashi, at the head of the Spanish Lagoon, is the "Rooi Frances" (French Pass), and while no historical mention is made of the incident, there is a deeply-rooted local tradition saying that at this point several hundred French soldiers were ambushed and killed during one of the French invasions.

Aruba, under Spanish rule until 1634, was in that year taken over by the West India Company, a Dutch Trading Company, with headquarters in Rotterdam, by right of conquest. The island was then left to its own fate, more or less, due to the extreme difficulty of maintaining regular communication between Curacao and Aruba. The West India Company, however, granted permission to a chosen few to settle and engage in commerce on the Island. History indicates that Moses Van Salomon Levi Maduro was the first foreigner permitted to settle in Aruba, and following is the oath he was obliged to execute on June 7, 1754, to obtain this right:

"PROCLAMATION OF 1754 - CURACAO ARCHIVES"

"You, Moses Van Salomon Levi Maduro, swear: live as a trustworthy citizen, obey and serve the

Commander at all times, and will remain loyal to the Nobel Company; that you will not, in any way trade, sell to, or buy anything from foreigners, and that you will immediately report any proposals to buy or sell. Further, you will report to the Commander, anything you may hear concerning an uprising against the Island. The land placed in your care, by the grace of the Nobel Company, will be cultivated, but you will not damage, transfer or sell same. Your heirs will live on, work, and enjoy the profits thereof, it being understood that in the end the land will be returned to the Nobel Company.

"SECOND: You will not construct an enclosure for your cattle without the knowledge and consent of the Commander.

"THIRD: Should you, in any way, not fulfill the conditions of the present, the Commander shall have full authority to deport you from the Island, taking over, without formality and as a possession improvements made by you."

It is interesting to know that the first foreign settler of Aruba was a member of the maduro family of Curacao, who are, today, one of the richest and most powerful on the Island of Curacao.

The language known as "Papiamentu" spoken in Aruba, is a blending of Spanish and Portuguese interlarded occasionally with Dutch, French, and English words. A peculiar thing about the "Patois" is that it has no fixed grammatic rules and it has been developed and adapted by the natives. Papiamentu, as spoken in Aruba, contains more Spanish than the patois of Bonaire and Curacao.

The origin of the name "Aruba" is doubtful. Some believe that the name is, in some manner,

connected with the discovery of gold on the island. Early historians mention the names "Orus" and "Oruba" which are possibly derived from the Spanish "Oro Hubo" meaning "There was Gold". Others believe that the name may have been derived from "Oirubai" of the Guiarani Indian dialect meaning "Guide", since gold was not discovered for some time after the island was named.

Of the three windward islands, Curacao, Bonaire and Aruba, the best evidence of the early Indian inhabitants is found in Aruba. Excellent specimens of the early hieroglyphics are still to be seen in places known as "Ayo" and "Piedra Plata". Also, such early implements as stone hatchets, tommyhawks, etc., are frequently found in Aruba. A number of vaselike tombs have been found in Aruba, which are in the National Museum in Rotterdam, Holland.

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## ARUBA'S INDUSTRIES, PAST AND PRESENT

### GOLD MINING

In the year 1725, a Norwegian miner, Paaules Printz, was sent by the West India Company to Aruba to investigate the belief that minerals were to be found there. He was, however, recalled before his investigations were complete. Otherwise, he would probably have made the discovery at that time. Letters exchanged between Printz and the GENTLEMEN XIX give proof that he had strong suspicions that metallic ore existed in Aruba.

Gold was located in June, 1824, and on August 4th, the Governor of Curacao, Cantzlaar, his Adjutant, Capt. Van Raders, his Secretary, W. Prince, Captain of a Corps of Engineers F. Abbring, the Commander of the Military Guard J. F. W. Gravenhorst, a Sergeant, two Corporals, and twenty soldiers landed in Aruba.

Prior to this time the military forces stationed in Aruba consisted of a junior officer of the Dutch Military Forces as Commander, two horsemen and two foot soldiers.

The discovery of gold soon brought the island of Aruba to the foreground. The first ore was found to be alluvial Gold, washed from the sand beds of the water courses along the West Coast. Later, primary gold was located in quartz galleries. In the quartz was a hard white mineral. The gold was so finely mixed

that at times the sprinkling could not be seen and its existence could only be established by smelting, while at times, it was in veins and fine leaves. Nuggets "Palitas" have also been found; the largest is said to have weighed 6.425 Netherlands pounds. A cast of this nugget is to be found in the museum at Laiden, Holland.

The Dutch Government maintained control of the Gold Industry of Aruba until 1832, up to which time several hundred pounds of Pure Gold had been extracted and shipped to Holland.

During this year, by decree of the Dutch Government, mining became lawful for all in habitants of Aruba.

Seemingly the gold industry in Aruba was never very successful. A concession granted to L. J. de Long in the Hague for a period of forty years was withdrawn in 1866. In 1867 the concession was granted to Franciscus Isola for thirty-five years. Again in 1869 the concession was transferred to Messrs. Rickets & Co., of New York, which company in turn sold their rights to the Aruba Gold Mining Company in 1872. This company also did not succeed and in 1900 turned its concession over to the Government.

In 1908, a new company was formed "Aruban Goud Maatschappij". This firm was the first to make a success of the industry and during the first year it paid a 25% dividend and up to 1910 had paid dividends to the stockholders amounting to over 50% of the initial investment.

The secret of the success of this Company was attributed to the "Tributers System." The actual mining was left to the land holders who brought their quartz to the smelting plant and

when a paying quantity of gold was found in the quartz, the miner was paid for it accordingly.

With the advent of the daily wage scale of labor to Aruba with the establishment of the Dutch Shell refinery at Oranjestad, this system of mining could no longer be operated and the project was abandoned.

The ruins of the old gold smelting plants are still to be seen at Balashi, midway between San Nicholas and Oranjestad, near the "Rooi Francais" and at Bushiribana on the north west coast, where the enormous stone walls resemble prehistoric monuments.

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#### PHOSPHATE MINING

The phosphate mines were located at Cerro Colorado, the extreme Southeast point of the island. In the year 1874, phosphate was discovered by J. H. Water Gravenhorst, and the Aruba Phosphate Maatschappij was founded in 1881. History mentions that during the first fourteen years the Government received, up to the end of 1895, Fls. 2,000,000.00 in export duty. This would indicate that during the first 14 years of operation, 250,000 tons of phosphate were exported.

Phosphate was found in layers sometimes as much as twenty feet thick, and was shipped from San Nicholas. Transportation from the mine to

the loading pier was over a narrow gauge track in twenty car trains drawn by a light locomotive.

Statistics indicate that from 1881 to 1909, a period of 28 years, 742,561 registered tons of Phosphate were exported from San Nicholas to France, England, and America, which contained an average of 70% phosphoric acid.

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## ALOES FOR THE WORLD

From the period of Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. to modern medical practice in 1938 A.D. - thus from ancient times to the present stretches the long history of Aloes; and for more than one hundred years the most important part in that history has been played by a tiny Caribbean Island, Aruba. With an area less than that of Manhattan, it exports approximately 78% of the total world's supply of Aloes.

Although they are one of the oldest natural sources for medicinals, Aloes are grown on a commercial scale in but few places besides Aruba. With exception of several parts of Western Africa, Venezuela and the neighboring Dutch islands of Curacao and Bonaire, which together produce the balance of world supply, Aloes are grown commercially nowhere else in the world. The entire production of Aruba's Aloes is exported for refining, more than three-fourths being sold to large manufacturers of pharmaceuticals in the United States, the remainder being shipped to England and, in lesser quantities, to Europe.

An exchange exists for the sale and purchase of raw Aloes, classified in trade as a gum, and its refined derivative Aloin (pronounced like "halloween" without the "h") much like that for other commodities in world commerce, and their market prices fluctuate similarly according to supply and demand. 595,000 pounds of the raw Aloes gum was exported from Aruba during 1937, destined principally for conversion to an ingredient for cathartics. Chemical analysis of Aloes gums has shown an average Aloin content of 18-20% for the variety produced

in Aruba, as compared to 10-12% for that of other varieties, accounting probably for the preference shown in world markets for the Aruba product. Alocs gum currently is quoted at a price ranging from 30 to 35¢ per pound, although in recent years it has fallen as low as 6¢ per pound due to bumper crops. Refined Aloin is currently quoted at about \$2.40 per pound.

180 species of Alocs plants have been classified, some reaching a height of five feet. Of these, three important varieties only are used to supply the Aloin of present day commerce; namely, Cape, Curacao and Socotrine. According to botanists, the latter variety appears to have been the original, it first having been found on the island of Socotora near the west African coast. Aruba's Alocs were first brought by sailing ships early in the nineteenth century from Socotora by Dutch West Indies colonists. The present wide distribution over the entire island has resulted almost solely from the natural propagation of the plants. With more nearly perfect climatic conditions for the growth of Alocs with the highest Aloin content than anywhere else, Aruba has made their cultivation its major source of revenue from natural resources. Exactly the proper amount of tropic sunshine tempered by the trade winds, cool nights, intermittent rains during three months of the year and a sea level soil suited to its needs all combine to make Aruba's Alocs thrive abundantly, with little or no cultivation beyond periodic removal of moisture absorbing weeds from the fields.

The Aruba or Curacao variety of Alocs is a ruggedly strong plant averaging 12 inches in height and growing in a stemless cluster of thick, fleshy, juice-filled leaves with sharp

tips and spined edges. Varying in color from a yellowish green to dark amber brown, depending on their age, the plants grow solidly covering the fields. Dense clusters of small, tubular-shaped flowers are borne at long intervals. However, the flowers do not produce seeds for propagation, reproduction being effected by means of new plants sprouting from shoots or runners put out at the bottom of the cluster.

Extraction of the juice from the leaves and its preparation for export is one of the major sources of native Arubans' incomes, many averaging 7 to \$9 a day during the harvesting season, which extends from early March to late in October. The leaves are cut from near the base of the plant with a short knife. Care must be taken to cut them at an angle as improper cutting results in the plant's dying. Placed cut end down in long, tilted wooden troughs blackened by years of service, the heat from the sun causes the leaves to exude their thick, pungently odorous juice, which is dripped from the lower end of the trough into a receptacle. Collected in the fields by boys on donkeys, the fresh, lemon-yellow juice is poured into small covered wooden tubs and carried, one on each side, to a central shed where it is stored in large vats or drums. In early times the water content of the fresh Alocs juice was evaporated simply by filling sheep or goat skins with the fluid and allowing them to hang in the sunshine for a month or more. The handling of it today has changed little from that primitive method beyond speeding up the evaporation by boiling. After a sufficient amount has been collected and allowed to settle out bits of leaves, dirt and other foreign matter, the transparent liquid is poured into a great copper cauldron with a capacity of 40 to 50 gallons, and a wood fire is lit

under it. After 12 to 14 hours of continuous boiling, all of which time it is stirred with a long-handled ladle to prevent its boiling over, the liquid becomes pitch black and completely opaque. It is then ladled into paper-lined boxes of a uniform size and cooled to the heavy consistency of warm asphalt. After being wrapped in burlap, the 125 lb. boxes are carted to one of the several dealers' warehouses in Oranjestad the capital city, where the season's yield is stored ready for export by freighter. By combining into small community groups, the Aloes farmers, each with an equal investment in a common boiling depot, are able to prepare their gum for market with a minimum of cost. The less affluent natives unable to share in the investment pay a small fee for the use of the boiling equipment.

Many attempts have been made to find a chemical substitute for the properties peculiar to Aloin in its major use as a cathartic ingredient, but none has so far been discovered. And Arubans hope that none ever will be found, for it has provided a principal means of livelihood for generations of families who have worked in the Aloes fields for a living.

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## ARUBA'S WEATHER

In the history of a community whose weather plays such a pleasantly perfect part, it would be unthinkable not to devote a chapter to Aruba's climate. The glorious year-round sunshine and even temperature, and the cool never-failing breezes have placed Aruba high up on the world's list of pleasant regions.

Like most tropical countries, there is a wet and a dry season. Early during the construction days of the Refinery, it was learned that what are known in the States as the winter and spring months; i. e., January to June, were Aruba's dry season. Statistics kept at the Research Laboratory have established this fact. Figures provided by this department show March to be the driest month in eight years from 1930 to 1937 inclusive. Three years of that period there was no rainfall at all during March. But over the same period, December had the highest average rainfall, with November, 1932 topping the highest individual monthly fall with 9.71 inches. During that particular November, there occurred a three-day storm, with the wind, shifting from East to South, reaching near-hurricane velocity. Rain fell incessantly and was lashed by the gale through bungalow louvres, which on the south side seldom had been wet before, and were not water tight. Buckets and bath-towels were necessary to catch the water which, in many cases, blew the entire width of the bungalow rooms exposed to the storm. It was during that storm that the Electrical Department learned they would have to take precautions against floods, hitherto deemed unnecessary in Aruba. Lines were blown down and circuits flooded, throwing the Colony into

darkness for one entire night. Natives declared the storm to be most unusual. Nothing like it has been experienced since.

As a matter of fact, climatic conditions approximating anything which might be described as a storm, do not occur in Aruba except at long intervals, and then are not of serious nature. During the past few years Aruba felt two slight earth tremors, reported to be the result of disturbances the center of which were near the Venezuelan coast. And just to prove Aruba's climatic versatility, a waterspout passed over the Colony early one morning in the fall of 1937. It whirled fences and plants up into the air, twisting garages out of shape, and doing other slight damage -- all within fifteen minutes which it required to pass over the island. These freak visitations are merely the exceptions proving the rule that Aruba has Grade A weather almost continuously.

Aruba, with its coral formation offering perfect drainage, may be said to be at its best during the rainy season. Vegetation responds quickly to the showers, and the island assumes a bright green aspect, which remains for several months after the daily rains have ceased to fall. The average rainfall over a year is about fifteen inches, with the greater part of this falling between October and January. Usually the rains come in short heavy downpours, dropping out of low clouds which the strong winds blow across the island at a rapid rate. The result is bright sunshine within a few minutes after a heavy downpour. Or vice versa.

The average temperature in Aruba is about 85 degrees. Surf bathing may be indulged in with perfect comfort the year round. Picnics

are planned and enjoyed at almost every season of the year, without a thought being given to weather. Seldom are the picnickers disappointed on account of rain.

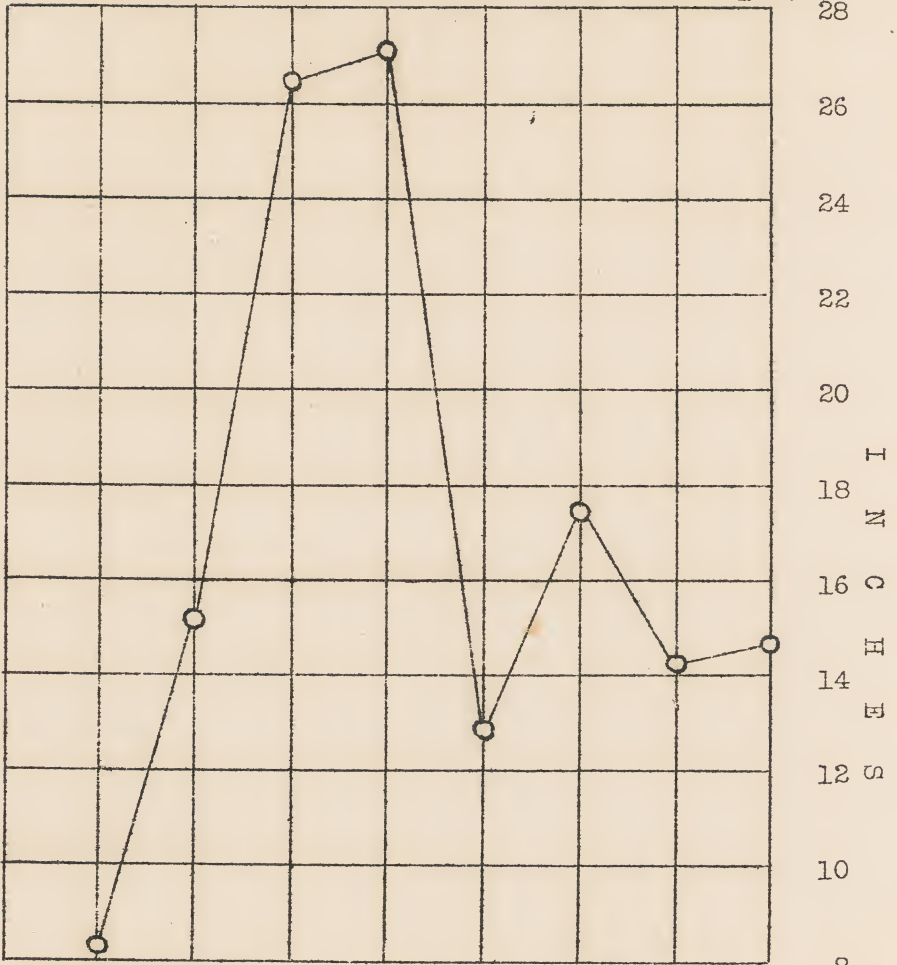
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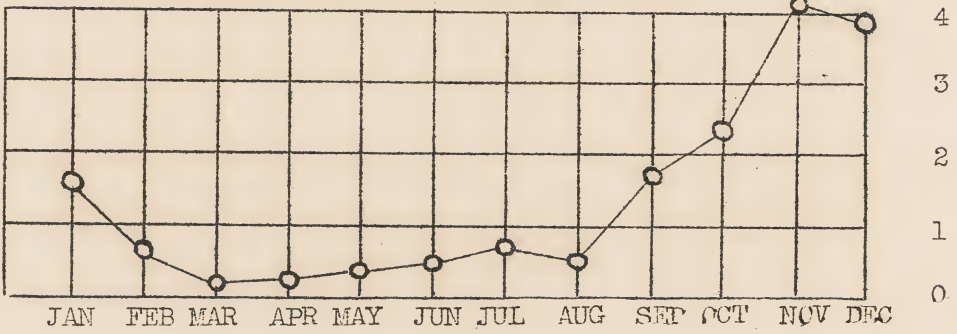


# ARUBA RAINFALL

TOTAL ANNUAL  
 1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935 1936 1937



AVERAGE MONTHLY



POPULATION OF THE CURACAO TERRITORY  
According to statistics prepared by  
The Chief of the Central Bureau of Population Registration

	ARUBA		BONAIRE		CURACAO		SABA		ST. EUSTATIUS		ST. MARTIN	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Jan. 1 1936	10531	9883	2681	3258	26588	28875	539	877	519	679	1090	158
Jan. 1 1937	11097	10541	2619	3208	28064	30169	529	874	523	690	1041	152
Jan. 1 1938	12372	11347	2450	3135	29802	31081	464	782	522	671	917	142

Note: Figures for St. Martin indicate population of that section controlled by the Netherlands.

## GEOLOGICAL STUDY OF ARUBA

During the summer of 1930, Professor George S. Corfield, of the School of Geography, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, visited Aruba. Shortly after Professor Corfield's departure, the PAN-ARUBAN received the following article on Aruba, which was published at that time:-

"Without doubt Aruba came into existence as a result of volcanic activity, but, as far as I see, the evidence discredits the idea that it ever was a volcano in itself. It might be part of a rim of a crater, the rest of which lies deeply submerged to the northward. Since there are no pre-quaternary fossils, it is difficult to set the date of its first appearance. However, it seems reasonable to connect it with the period when the great chain of Rocky and Andes Mountains was uplifted, folded and faulted into grander peaks than even now exist. Subsequently at a great depression of the earth's crust, the Caribbean and other seas were formed. It is to this period that Aruba's history as an island begins. Due to minor movements later, Aruba has appeared to rise out of the sea at three times as shown by the shore lines conspicuous in the northern and eastern sections.

"The granite boulders distributed over the island are the result of weathering. Due to the resistant qualities of the rocks many have taken on peculiar and fantastic shapes. Hooiberg, the most conspicuous, yet not the highest, peak on the island, is the result of this differential weathering on a large scale. The top of this peak may be the last remnant of the former surface of the island.

"Aruba is the driest of the islands of the West Indian group. Over a 24-year period the average rainfall was 17.41 inches. It is interesting to note one year when a little over nine inches fell in 19 days of the year, the deaths were three times greater than any previous year. But give the Aruban the average rainfall and with the steady wind, and healthgiving sun, he can hold his own.

"The native has many qualities to be desired. I was particularly impressed by his kindness and generosity. I hiked over many miles of the island and of nowhere have I but the pleasantest memories of our association. In cultural New England, a stranger's requests are given more attention if it is evident that his family tree was used in constructing the Mayflower. In Aruba, no questions were asked.

"With the advent of refineries on Aruba, laborers have gravitated toward them and left agriculture in a less important state than formerly. Also previously, in the home, women wove straw hats to supplement what the husband could earn. In 1920, straw hats to the value of Fls. 80,987.00 were exported from Aruba, while in 1929, after the refineries were well established this commodity had shrunken to Fls. 6,450.00 Laborers earn a good wage at the refinery which is relatively safe and sure. This will result in a higher standard of living."

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## TRANSPORTATION

The geographical aloofness of Aruba makes transportation to and from the island a very important and vital problem. Progress in this respect may, perhaps, be demonstrated best by recounting the first trips to Aruba of the refinery's pioneers, and comparing them with present day facilities.

In the beginning, or during the pre-construction days, it was necessary to rely chiefly upon sailing vessels if your destination was Aruba. It was an experience long to be remembered by those who traveled by schooner, either from Curacao or from a Venezuelan port. Accommodations consisted of a little space on the vessel's deck, where a passenger sat during the entire trip, endeavoring to keep out of the way of the crew, or the stray waves which occasionally broke over the bow and deck. A bit of canvas, part of an old sail, served as a cover under which the traveler slept during the long night. The best feature of the trip was dawn, with a glimpse of Aruba straight ahead. Passengers did not complain of the meals on those schooners - there were no meals, although coffee was served at an early hour in the morning by a mess-boy - who well earned his title. However the beverage was ambrosial to the traveler, but forgotten quickly when the breeze, stiffening as the day grew, helped the schooner into the harbor.

Only an occasional small steamer put in to Oranjestad, but as the refineries developed, Aruba became a regular port of call for the Red D and Royal Netherlands ships. With the dredging of San Nicolaas harbor, that port became accessible to oil tankers. When the con-

struction of the Lago refinery got under way, these oil carriers offered the principal means for transporting the hundreds of employees coming from the States.

From these early days of oil in Aruba, Transportation has kept apace with other developments. Throughout the world, Aviation was making great strides forward during this period, and the realization of the benefits to be derived from air travel were quickly grasped by those in Aruba. Instrumental in bringing the first airplane to Aruba was M. Viana, who in 1932 opened a flying field on the outskirts of San Nicholaas. A. J. Vicellio, a trained aviator from Dallas, Texas ( and at present a pilot with KLM) was brought in with a plane. The untiring efforts of Viana and Vicellio to promote flying here finally enabled them to establish the first regular plane service which connected Aruba and Curacao by air. For a period of nine months, as the Caribbean Flying Service, they carried Mail and Passengers in their Loening Amphibian with out a mishap between the two islands.

During the latter part of 1933, KIM took over this service, establishing a new landing field a short distance from Oranjestad, and equipping it in a thoroughly modern manner, Plane service has since been bettered from one and two flights a week to the present schedule of several planes each way daily. To this Curacao-Aruba flight has been added Maracaibo, at which port it is now possible to trans-ship to the Pan American Airways for the United States. This feature of 1938 has cut travel time between New York and Aruba to 23 hours from the eight or ten days required via tanker ten years before when construction was first started

Another 1938 feature offered travelers to and from Aruba was the inauguration of weekly calls of the Grace Line steamers. These luxury liners represent the last word in comfort afloat, and a trip on them is a vacation in itself for those employees leaving Aruba on their periodic visit to the States.

Intra-island transportation should not be omitted from the record of advancement. The old highway between San Nicholas and Oranjestad, while picturesque, was so rough that those who were forced to travel it had little time or inclination to enjoy the scenic beauty through which they were passing. The old route followed the water closely after leaving San Nicholas, passing by the site of the present labor camp, on to Sabaneta. Beyond this point the early days traffic jogged off to the north, and wound its way through hills to the old gold mine buildings at Balashi and turned abruptly into French Pass, continuing on to Santa Cruz, and around Hooiberg to Oranjestad.

In the old days, cars were somewhat at a premium. Taxi fares started at Fls. 8.00 for the trip. Over an hour was necessary to travel the route comfortably.

During 1930, the new concrete highway was constructed, being formally opened early the following year. A bridge across the Spaansch Lagoen shortened the distance between the two towns by miles, cutting the traveling time to twenty or thirty minutes. The smooth hard-surfaced highway proved a great attraction to motorists. Taxis, of the station-wagon type, began to appear as if by magic. The road was filled with them. Speeding on the new highway resulted naturally, perhaps, as many drivers

realized for the first time the power of their motor on a good road. Before this condition was checked, many fatal accidents occurred. The road was widened, danger signals installed, and every precaution is now taken to make the highway safe for all travelers.

The principal streets of Oranjestad and San Nicholaas have been hard-surfaced. Automobile licenses were formerly Fls. 80.00, but about 1934 they were cut to the present price of Fls. 40.00 per year.



## OIL COMES TO ARUBA

(Ed. Note: Up to this point the history has carried us from the discovery of the Islands and the early pirates, through the agricultural and industrial development and to a modern geological survey of Aruba itself. Now we come to the alluring story of "black gold", the advent of oil, the birth of an era in these Islands that eclipses all that has gone before. We cannot guess the extent of its future influence but, at this date, it has done more to bring the West Indies before the eyes of the world than was even dreamed of a short decade ago. It has brought unexpected wealth and distinction to these coral bound shores. It is young in years and many of the facts that will make future history are common knowledge now, but the founding of the industry in Aruba, the trials and experiences of the pioneers, the ultimate overcoming of the many new and unexpected difficulties, are of undying interest, and so we have asked Mr. B. J. Vavasour, of the Eagle Company, and Capt. Rodger of our own Marine Dept., and Mr. D. J. Smith, who needs no introduction, to give us the history and highlights of the early developments of the oil industry in Aruba. They consented and the stories follow:)

### "SHELL" SELECTS ARUBA FOR REFINERY SITE

Early in 1927, the Royal Dutch Shell Company became interested in possible refinery sites on the Paraguana Peninsula and also Aruba. After preliminary survey work it was decided to

erect a small topping plant near Druif at the N.W. corner of the island. The Arend Petroleum Company was formed, and Mr. R. W. F. Newton was sent here from Mexico and appointed Manager. He arrived in July, 1927, and was shortly afterwards followed by Mr. C. J. Crawford, who was in charge of the construction work, and a few other pioneers, also from Mexico.

Numerous difficulties had to be overcome before construction really got under way. A wharf had to be constructed on the inside of the reef at Oranjestad for the discharge of material, accommodations had to be found for the continually growing staff and, perhaps the most difficult problem of all, suitable food had to be procured. In the very early days a good proportion of the staff were housed in the building which is now known as the "Astoria Clubhouse". This, although supplemented by various houses in and around the town, soon proved insufficient, and a number of half timber, half canvas houses were erected along the seashore at the refinery site and all members of the staff who were unaccompanied by their wives were moved into these. At this time the Company was installed in temporary offices in Nassau Street and a Commissary was opened alongside shortly afterwards.

The actual construction of the refinery commenced in September, 1927, and, soon after, a detachment from the Chicago Bridge & Iron Works, under the supervision of Mr. "Bat" Nelson - whose name will be familiar to many Pan-Arubanites - arrived to build the tanks. Work continued without any more than the usual minor difficulties being encountered thru into 1928, during which time the Company had moved its offices to the refinery site, and early in May the plant was practically completed. Mr. Crawford, having

terminated his share of the work, left - incidentally to build another refinery for Shell interests in Buenos Aires. In June, 1928, the first shipments of crude were received from Lagunillas and the operation of the plant commenced. However, due to the fact that the contractors for the wharf had had continuous trouble with their skilled labor from Holland, this had not by then been completed and for some little time it was necessary to effect all movement of oil between tankers and shore thru pipelines laid across barges. The trouble was finally solved by the contractor sending his laborers back to Holland and the construction of the wharf was completed by the Arend Company's own staff in September, 1928.

Three lake tankers, each with a capacity of approximately 18,000 bbls. were sent out from England and have been in regular service between Lagunillas and Aruba since May, 1928.

Construction of the Refinery Colony was started in 1928, and the houses were occupied by the latter end of that year. The Club House has since been enlarged, roads built and the houses fenced in. Two concrete tennis courts were laid down and a small but very sporty golf course is now open near the hospital. Quite recently the London office authorized a grant to the Company to help with the building of a sports field near the Colony. A bathing beach has also been fitted up with huts and diving platforms.

Mr. Newton remained in charge until March, 1930, when he was loaned to the Mexican Eagle Oil Company for the construction of a refinery in Mexico City. He was relieved here by Mr. J. A. Toubkin, who remained until January, 1931, when he left to go on leave preparatory to taking

over the Managership of the Mexico City plant on its completion. After Mr. Toubkin's departure, Mr. B. J. Vavasour, chief engineer, took over the Managership. The work in Mexico City having been completed, Mr. R. W. F. Newton returned to Aruba in December, 1931.

During 1929, a small hospital under the charge of Dr. A. F. Dussenbroek, was built and fully equipped on a property nearby the Company's concession. This at present has accommodations for 16 patients nominally but is capable of taking more, if necessary. (Written in 1932)



## SAN NICHOLAS BECOMES OIL TRANSFER TERMINAL

(Ed. Note: The advent of the Lago Companies marked the beginning of a new era for Aruba, an era that was destined to make this little Island one of the most important shipping centers among the many that dot the Caribbean Sea from Florida and the Gulf of Mexico east and south to South America. And who is in better position to give us the story of the transformation of San Nicholas Bay and this end of the Island than Capt. R. Rodger? In his own words:)

In the year 1924, there was an operating company in Lake Maracaibo called the British Equatorial Oil Company and in that year, the Company sold out its rights to the Lago Petroleum Corporation, who immediately increased their holdings. At the time it took over the British Equatorial Oil Company, the Lago was really a producing company in Lake Maracaibo but had no means of moving its oil other than by selling to outside companies. The Lago's first objective when it took over the British company was to obtain the necessary small vessels to transport crude oil of its own production from Lake Maracaibo and about July of that year the two small ships SS. "Francunio" and SS. "Inverampton" were sent out from England to inaugurate the oil transportation service.

In the meantime, Capt. Rodger and Mr. J. O. Boyd were sent out by the company which then owned the Lago Petroleum Corporation to endeavor to secure a terminal in Curacao, Paraguana, Aruba, or any other suitable place. In July of 1924, Capt. Rodger and Mr. Boyd were joined at Curacao

by Capt. W. Clark, now of the Venezuelan Gulf Oil Company at Maracaibo but then associated with the Lago. Their object was to find the most suitable terminal site, having in mind that not only the immediate needs had to be met but every consideration had to be given to future expansion because of the established fact that Lago owned a valuable piece of producing property in Venezuela and had every reason to expect their oil venture to expand. Curacao was investigated to see if any place would be suitable, as was also the coast of Paraguana in Venezuela. After those two places had been looked over thoroughly and their possibilities considered, the party decided to turn its attention to Aruba. Having some previous information as to the possibilities of San Nicholas Bay, the party proceeded to San Nicholas Bay, early on arrival in Aruba, and found accommodation in the "White House" which still stands opposite the Marine Office. and is used as the refinery Common Labor Offices. This was the only house at that time within easy reach of San Nicholas Bay. After about two weeks at San Nicholas studying the possibility of dredging a channel to the sea, the unanimous opinion was that this was the best place and Messrs. Rodger, Clark and Boyd confidently recommended it to the interested parties in London, feeling sure that no matter how great the expenditure required to cope with the dredging, a good channel could be found and made into the bay, and that the rest would be easy.

The land for the terminal presented an ideal site and this, with other advantages the island possessed, so favorably impressed Messrs. Rodger, Clark and Boyd that they decided to use all their influence to convince those who would be responsible for the large outlay of capital that San Nicholas Bay was the best location for a terminal. One outstanding advantage was that

the distance between Aruba and Lake Maracaibo was considerably shorter than the run to Curacao. This difference in haulage would mean a saving in any one year of many thousands of miles for Lago's lake tankers as against others whose principal terminal was situated in Curacao.

In October, 1924, it was finally decided that San Nicholas Bay would be the terminal of the Lago interests and about that time the Lago Oil & Transport Company, Limited, was incorporated in Canada. Contracts were closed for the dredging of a channel thru the reef and a dredger was sent down from Charleston, S. Carolina, to begin operations. Meantime, while the work was progressing in the dredging of the channel and some parts of the harbor, work was proceeding at a fast pace in building necessary tanks on the shore site to receive crude oil. The two small tankers mentioned started operating in November, 1924, and as San Nicholas could not be opened for some time, it became necessary to place a depot ship off the town of Oranjestad, near the northwest end of the island and this depot ship, SS. "Invergarry", held this station from November, 1924, to July, 1925. During that period the two small vessels were augmented by the arrival of the SS. "Invercorrie" early in 1925, and on the arrival of that ship the Lago Shipping Company (incorporated in London) came into existence. It was apparent early in 1925 that these three small ships could not bring out the oil in sufficient quantities to meet the commitments of the Lago Oil & Transport Company, Limited, and orders were given for the building of the four small tankers known here as the "Inverlago" class.

Mr. J. C. Farquharson came to Aruba, as Assistant to Capt. R. Rodger, in December, 1924.



In July, 1925, the interests of the British Company in the Lago Companies were sold to the Pan American Petroleum Corporation. Events from that time on moved fast and efforts were redoubled to open up San Nicholas Bay at an early date. To accomplish this further dredging equipment was sent from the United States and the engineering problems connected with the dredging and the building of the terminal were entrusted to Mr. A. M. McKean, who, with splendid foresight, initiative and ability carried the work towards completion about the middle of 1927. In 1926, Mr. McKean's staff was strengthened by the arrival of assistant engineers and other skilled men from the United States. Among the first arrivals (June, 1927) was Mr. Fred Penney, who had much to do with the erecting of the boilers and general machinery and who later became plant superintendent. Mr. Ralph Watson, who is now Mr. Penney's assistant, arrived in February, 1925, one of his first jobs being the sounding of San Nicholas Bay.

In July, 1925, the "Invergarry" was replaced by the SS. "Frederic Ewing", under Capt. Jensen who is well known to almost everyone on this island and is still in charge of the vessel (Jan. 1932) now the SS. "C. J. Barkdull", and for nine months the ship lay at anchor receiving oil from the lake tankers which were placed alongside for that purpose just as ships are now placed alongside the dock. Operations, of course, were not on a very large scale and there was much to contend with due to the fact that the "Frederic Ewing" was lying in practically the open Caribbean Sea. However, despite all obstacles, loading ships in this manner proceeded very satisfactorily and when one month the maximum of two million barrels exported was reached, Capt. Rodger and his staff felt that they were doing about the best that was



possible under the conditions. The "Frederic Ewing" was relieved at its station by the arrival of the SS. "George G. Henry", Capt. Heckman, and this vessel acted as depot ship for almost 19 months or until San Nicholas Bay was opened up on November, 17, 1927.

By that time, the lake tanker fleet had increased from the small "Francunion" type to 12 ships of the "Inverlago" type and five others of a slightly larger capacity had been ordered.

At the opening up of the harbor on November 17, 1927, the terminal had ready for operation eight crude tanks of 70,000 barrels capacity each with the necessary steam pumps installed which were estimated to be of a capacity around 2,500 barrels each per hour. The operating staff within the concession was accommodated in 12 houses, known as the frame houses, which still form part of the village. In these days, fresh meats, fruits, vegetables were unknown and all edibles were to be found only in cans but occasionally small luxuries were brought over by the lake tankers from Venezuela. Ice was brought over from Curacao and was usually transported in open barrels. The main stable diet was, of course, chicken, which then could be purchased at 40 to 50¢ Dutch. Eggs were about one to two cents each, Dutch.

While tank building was in progress, the contract for the building of the main dock was let to John Monks & Sons of New York and they carried out their part of the contract in a most expeditious manner. It may be said truthfully that there is not a better dock to be found anywhere in the West Indies.

November 17, 1927, was a gala day and the honor fell on the SS. "R. W. Stewart", Capt. Larsen, to perform the opening ceremony. This ship

was followed on the same day by entry of the "Cerro Ebano", Capt. Cook, and as the lake tankers were also diverted that day from the parent ship at Oranjestad to make San Nicholas their base, it was truly a remarkable sight for all who had a hand in the undertaking and must have been more so to the inhabitants of this island to find San Nicholas Bay which they had known as a safe haven for small vessels to be now accommodating two large ocean tankers and five small lake tankers. It was soon apparent that the loading facilities were all that could be desired in the way of security for the ocean going vessels and if loading had to be speeded up it was only a question of more power and lines. This, of course, all came in turn until today it can be reckoned that at San Nicholas ocean tankers can be given a turn-around which is probably equalled by very few ports in the oil business.

About this time a decision was reached to establish a refinery here and the advance guard for the building of this great plant arrived early in March of 1928.

Meantime the building of lake tankers had continued to meet the increased developments and in March, 1928, the fleet was comprised of 17 vessels, to be further augmented during the next year by three more of larger capacity and finally by one of a larger type than all the others, the SS. "Maracay".

## SAN NICHOLAS BECOMES A REFINING CENTER

(And now we come to our own part in the development of industry in Aruba; that is, the part of the Manufacturing Department. The story is almost as intriguing as the reality and old-timers as well as those who are not so familiar with the early efforts to establish a refinery on these coral shores, will enjoy reading Mr. Don Smith's story; written in 1932):

Pan Aruba has become so civilized and comfortable that the few of us who landed here four year ago (at writing) like to reminisce and talk of old times even though only a short time has elapsed since we also were tenderfeet in Aruba; tenderfeet both in fact and in the Western sense. Travel around the concession on foot was not easy when coral and cactus covered the refinery area. Among our first supplies was a liberal length of rubber belting which was used for shoe soles. The original instructions carried a warning to bring plenty of shoes as new ones were unobtainable except from the slop chests of the ships calling at San Nicholas. The scenes on board at each arrival reminded one of the stories of South Sea traders whose ships were besieged by swarms of natives anxious to trade copra for beads, clothes or what have you. A short outline of early events might be of interest to those who arrived at later dates.

In July, 1927, the Manufacturing Department of the Pan American Petroleum & Transport Company was reorganized by the transfer of Mr. T. S. Cooke, Mr. L. G. Smith, and myself from the Standard Oil Company (Indiana) organization at Casper with instructions to proceed immediately

with the selection of a refinery site and the design of a refinery somewhere in the Maracaibo district for the purpose of refining Venezuelan crude oil. In the early part of August, 1927, Mr. P. H. Harwood, Vice-President of the Pan American Petroleum & Transport Company, escorted this group to Aruba via the SS. "Cerro Azul" making a record breaking trip from New York in five days and seventeen hours. In addition to these gentlemen, Mr. Paul Weidner of the Midwest Refining Company was made a member of the party.

Originally there was no thought of building such a refinery on the island of Aruba; therefore our stay at Aruba was short and the whole party proceeded to Maracaibo to inspect several locations along the Lake shore. After the inspection at Maracaibo, the party returned to Aruba where, because of difficulties surrounding various possible locations in Venezuela, careful consideration was given to an Aruban location, with the result that the present site was eventually selected and design work was started the latter part of 1927. The original survey was made by the inspection party during their visit to Aruba most of the observations being taken from the top of the Lago water tower, the party having climbed to this point of vantage for a birdseye view of the terrain. The approximate locations of stills, tanks, powerhouse, etc., were picked out during this elevated conference. It goes without saying that, in spite of the self-confidence of this group, the prospect of really starting construction in such a barren location left each member of the party with some misgivings as to the correctness of their judgment.

During the homeward trip, which was made on the SS. "Cerro Ebano" by way of Tampico and thence to New York, the major details of the original plant construction were decided upon.



It was not until February, 1928, however, that permission was given to actually start work. February 24, 1928, witnessed a small group arriving at Aruba to break ground. This group consisted of Mr. William Morris, Mr. E. H. Clendenin and Mr. W. B. McCune, whose duties were to proceed immediately with the construction of some sort of housing accommodations to take care of the men due to arrive later. Needless to say that, without supplies, tools, or any sort of equipment, their first efforts achieved the results but did not add beauty to the landscape. It was not until April 15, 1928, that the first shipment of lumber was received at San Nicholas. Mr. Clendenin was appointed Stevedore Boss and finally managed to unload this lumber jack-straw fashion. From this point on, construction progressed thru various difficulties in the way of delayed supplies, inadequate equipment and the usual difficulties of housing, transportation and labor until December, 1928, when the first piece of equipment became operative. All of the energy of the original construction force was devoted toward the construction and completion of the powerhouse and topping stills. The powerhouse started in December, 1928, and the topping stills in January 1929, and while the operation was somewhat ragged, the plant had actually started to earn money.

Looking back on this year, I remember in a rather kaleidoscopic fashion stevedore strikes, trouble with the local police, shortage of labor, importation of laborers from St. Martin and other islands, the arrival of the second group of men for construction work, including John Hendrikson, V. E. Hanson, "Bob" Miller, "Bill" Ewart, Gerald Cross, Oscar Henschke, "Tom" Brown, Frank Hocking, G. C. Gibson, and others who are now a part of our permanent organization; (Jan. 1932) these men arriving before June, 1928.

Construction troubles are usual with any sort of work, but with the conditions existing at Aruba at that time, more than the usual assortment was encountered.

To anyone who arrived in Aruba during the early days, the growth of the community is of major interest. The first arrivals found a few families already established with the Lago Petroleum Corporation, these families being old-timers at Aruba. Captain Rodger, with his family, occupied the building now used as Refinery Executive Office, with Mr. and Mrs. Penney and Mr. and Mrs. Alden as companions in their isolation, living in two of the houses since moved to make room for the Engineering and Accounting Offices. Several other houses adjoined these, being used to house various members of the Marine Department personnel. The Marine Department had moved to San Nicholas in November, 1927, the same month that saw the opening of the San Nicholas harbor, a gala event.

The refinery construction forces were originally housed in barracks located directly east of the present Inspection Laboratory and it is the memory of these quarters that remains with many of us who spent that year untangling the difficulties of construction on a semi-desert island. My chief recollection of this locality is Jim Bluejacket in his long white nightgown parading up and down the coral, rounding up the members of the poker game being promoted in Jim Crosbie's room where he could be seen pounding on the iron triangle calling in the stragglers. Eventually this homelike camp was turned over to the Kellogg Construction Company and the occupants were moved to the present village, where the houses had been under construction for several months.

The extension of activities necessitating the addition of the Kellogg Company to our staff was disappointing to all those fondly looking forward to houses for their families since promises were postponed as the houses had to be used as bachelor quarters (three men to each bedroom and kitchen with four to six men in the living room). Yes, there were lots of objections, but it couldn't be helped.

A new mess-hall was built and added on to several times, and after many delays we opened the hospital, then known as the new hospital. Previously, we had used a temporary shack which served remarkably well in spite of the lack of room and convenience.

My best memory of that period is filled with shortage of beds, houses, mess-hall accommodations and other facilities, caused mainly by expansions of our original plans.

The Main Office also migrated from one spot to another. A small stone building, later the nucleus of the Personnel Office, was our first abode. Later a building near the Machine Shop was built and finally the stone house formerly Captain Rodger's residence was appropriated for this purpose. Finally houses were completed and families commenced to arrive. Mrs. Cosio has the honor of being the first to arrive, landing on Aruba, July 13, 1928. We lived in House #4. Mrs. W. R. C. Miller, Mrs. E. H. Clendenin, and Mrs. Wm. McCune were the next arrivals, and gradually the change from a construction camp to a village was accomplished.

## ARUBA TODAY

While the Refinery was breaking throughput records - having bettered 300,000 barrels per day during 1937, the Colony was going ahead in its own way. Only during very short intervals was the bungalow building program halted. Several times, as many as fifty new bungalows were under construction at the same time. When the 1938 count has been made, there will be approximately 500 bungalows in the Colony. With the additions now under way to the eight bachelor quarters which house the single men (or should we say men whose families are not in Aruba?), it is estimated that 2500 people can be housed in the Colony. These figures do not include Lago Heights, which section has 100 bungalows and several bachelor quarters.

As the Colony increased in size, it improved in appearance. Gardening is responsible for the almost magic fashion in which the drab village, sitting high on a barren coral island, was transformed into a community of attractive yards and streets which would compare favorably with a suburb in the States. Only the patience and persistence of the first gardeners could have made these things possible. During the early days of the Colony, it was believed that but few plants and flowers could withstand the rigors of the salty East Winds, and the heat. Goats, lizards, ants and many other pests, together with a shortage of fresh water, took the pleasure from gardening. But as time went on, ambitious flower lovers were encouraged by the Company to overcome the many difficulties. Soil and fertilizer were made available. Water was supplied until a truly remarkable and gratifying effect has been ac-



complished. Almost every bungalow has some floral exhibit of note. Patios, pergolas and arbors have been erected in beautiful gardens, adding materially to the pleasure of living in the Colony.

The Community School has grown in proportion with the Colony. From a one-room one-teacher school in 1929, it has become a modern institution of learning requiring a staff of twelve teachers to impart knowledge to nearly 250 children. Three large buildings housing classrooms, library, laboratory and an auditorium have been constructed. A large, well-equipped play ground adjoins these buildings, and the students of the school are offered every advantage of the public schools in the States.

During 1937, construction work was started on the new \$200,000. hospital. About the time of its completion, a change of building schedule demanded that the site on which the new hospital had been erected would have to be used for the two dozen or more Hortonspheroids to be added to the ever spreading tank farm of the Refinery. Accordingly, the entire hospital building was moved on a specially constructed railroad, to a point a mile further east, on the top of a knoll near the Colorado Light. The hospital is equipped with the very latest medical paraphernalia, and is considered the finest hospital in this part of the world. To operate it, a staff of five doctors, two pharmacists, two technicians, about twenty nurses and a dozen or more clerks is required. There are divisions in the new building to accommodate native and foreign employees, with many private rooms for patients requiring them.

The Esso Club, opened officially at the 1930 New Years party, was first called the Pan Am

Club, the present name being given it early in 1938. Since that first memorable New Years party, the Club has been the scene of many gay social affairs. Practically all of the community functions of the Colony have taken place under the Esso Club roof.

During the period since 1930, many additions and alterations have been made to the Club building to make it the modern club it is in 1938. The theatre, when constructed, was without a roof over the auditorium. Dances, silent movies and amateur theatricals were given in the open air. The elements proved highly detrimental to the dance floor, and when the silent movies faded out for the more modern talkies, the high winds which swept through the auditorium interfered to a considerable extent with the acoustics. In 1933, a roof was constructed, which made the auditorium ideal for tropical entertainment.

During the early roofless days, a group calling themselves The Little Theatre Players produced a series of plays. "HANDS UP" and "SAFETY FIRST" were the first of many three-act plays presented. The Players were met with enthusiasm at each performance, and after the roof made it easier for their efforts to be put across, quite a number of plays with Broadway presentations were given, and an unusually high standard for amateur performances was established.

In 1934, under the management of Phil Hunter, a club restaurant was opened. Endless difficulties arose, and in spite of a demand for a service of this kind, the venture was abandoned as impractical. The room specially designed to house the restaurant is now used for art exhibits and an occasional cocktail dance.

About the same time, the wing which houses the game room and the assembly room was added. Pool tables had previously been located in the main lobby, and from the first had been objectionable in that prominent thoroughfare. The assembly room supplies a long felt need of the various clubs and organizations in the Colony, who use the same for their meetings.

The first mess-hall was located in a shed on the site of the present Personnel Office. It was replaced by a larger and better equipped mess-hall early in 1929 - on the location where the present dining hall stands today. The name "mess-hall" was formally tabooed by the Management in 1930, and "dining hall" was substituted. Various additions have been made to the building from time to time in order to provide proper accommodations for the increasing bachelor personnel. After the failure of the Club restaurant, a section of the dining hall was given over to serving meals to those who wished to secure restaurant service. Known as the Private Dining Hall, this feature has proven very popular with the occupants of the bungalows, who are now privileged to secure meals when the occasions demand.

## IN CONCLUSION

In all departments, from the essential oil throughput to such attendant features as bungalows, school curricula, bakery products, pianos, and all the myriad fine details that make up community life, the Lago Colony has grown as fast as a mining boom town. It differs from a mushroom town, however, in that its foundations are down deep, and its life is as full and varied as that of any community its size anywhere.

Mass psychology has changed in recent years, and where the common idea formerly was to spend one or at most two contracts here and then resettle in the United States, a majority of the colony's residents now look forward to an indefinite stay in Aruba, and plan their lives accordingly, with much the same problems, conveniences, joys and sorrows that they would have "at home", a term which gradually becomes synonymous with "Aruba".

- Finis -